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why a year ago I created the Early Childhood Interagency Team, which was led by Lieutenant Governor Maurstad. The team recently released a report detailing their work to date. I have endorsed several of their recommendations, including their proposal to expand the Department of Education's successful Early Childhood Projects. My budget dedicates over \$3 million over the biennium to accomplish this objective and other recommendations. The collaboration between Health and Human Services and the Department of Education on early childhood issues has been impressive and productive, and I am asking that they continue their good work. Some of our state's greatest assets are public and private institutions of higher learning. It's often in higher education that our young people prepare themselves to realize their dreams for the future and create our state's future. Therefore, I am pleased to make a historic commitment to higher education with the budget that I submit to you today. For several months, the University of Nebraska leadership has made the case that they need greater resources to reach competitive status with their peer institutions. To its credit, the university has undertaken critical reviews and the reallocation of resources over the last years. That effort continues, and it must, and I support the university in its task of setting priorities that will result in a more focused mission at a higher level of excellence. The investment I propose for the university and state colleges is important and it's aggressive. My budget provides an increase of \$26.6 million additional dollars in the first year of the budget, with another \$29.4 million added in the second year of the budget. At the same time, I challenge higher education in Nebraska, including the university, state colleges, and community colleges, in these key areas: first, to encourage and to actively recruit every Nebraska high school student to stay in Nebraska for their college education; secondly, to promote diversity among students and staff in higher education by actively recruiting students, not only from the United States but around the world; and, third, to promote collaboration, cooperation, and innovative partnerships which will ensure unparalleled educational opportunities for our students. In addition, I applaud Senator Kristensen for continuing to lead the discussion about reorganizing higher education governance in the state of Nebraska. This body will have my cooperation and support in